

# U.N. Chief Urges Immediate Ceasefire by 'all Parties' in Yemen War

NEW YORK - U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon on Thursday called for an immediate halt to the fighting in Yemen, the first time he has made such an appeal since Saudi-led air strikes against Iranian-backed Houthi rebels began three weeks ago.

Ban said the poorest country in the Middle East was already in a crisis before the recent outbreak of hostilities, with levels of food insecurity that were higher than in the poorest parts of Africa. He said the recent fighting had only exacerbated those problems.

"That is why I am calling for an immediate ceasefire in Yemen by all the parties," Ban said in a

speech to the National Press Club in Washington. "The Saudis have assured me that they understand that there must be a political process. I call on all Yemenis to participate in good faith."

"The United Nations-supported diplomatic process remains the best way out of a drawn-out war with terrifying implications for regional stability," he said in the speech, which was broadcast on C-SPAN radio.

Ban did not mention the decision by his outgoing special adviser on Yemen, Jamal Benomar, to resign his post in frustration at the failure of the U.N.-brokered peace



talks. Ban has chosen Mauritanian diplomat Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed to replace Benomar, diplomatic sources said. Benomar, a veteran Mo-

roccan diplomat, had irked Saudi Arabia and other Gulf nations with his handling of so-far unsuccessful peace talks between the Houthis and the Western- and

Gulf Arab-backed Yemeni government, Western U.N. diplomats said on condition of anonymity. In recent weeks, the diplomatic sources said,

the Saudis and other Gulf governments have snubbed Benomar because they felt he had been too accommodating toward the Houthis. (Reuters)

## Ukraine Wants Global Court to Investigate Crimes in Crimea

HAGUE - Ukraine wants the International Criminal Court to investigate all alleged recent war crimes in Crimea and eastern Ukraine, Foreign Minister Pavlo Klimkin said in an interview, broadening an existing probe.

Ukraine has already given the global court the authority to investigate crimes on its territory from November 21, 2013, to February 22, 2014, the period leading up to the fall of Ukraine's former president Viktor Yanukovich. Russia annexed Crimea soon after, and later in 2014 fighting erupted in eastern Ukraine between Kiev's forces and pro-Russian separatists. Kiev accuses Russia of sending

arms and troops to aid the rebels, which Moscow denies.

"We are quite optimistic about more, definitely more, engagement of the ICC," Pavlo Klimkin told Reuters before meeting the court's president and prosecutor on Friday.

An ICC referral would cover "everything under the (ICC) mandate, including crimes against humanity," he said.

Klimkin named the attack on the strategic port of Mariupol in eastern Ukraine which killed 30 in January as an example of a crime against humanity. "The shelling killed, in seconds, more than 30 people and heavily wounded 100 people,"

Klimkin said. "If you deliberately shell and, I stress, deliberately shell cities, killing civilians, it's a completely different situation (from military operations) and we have to engage the ICC." The wider probe proposed by Klimkin would for the first time consider allegations of direct Russian involvement.

Ukraine is also examining the possibility of launching a case against Russia at another court in The Hague, the International Court of Justice, the highest U.N. court for territorial disputes, Klimkin said. There was no immediate reaction from Russian authorities to Klimkin's comments. (Reuters)

## Sanctions Should Remain on Iran: Netanyahu

JERUSALEM - As the international community moves to finalize a nuclear deal with Iran, Israel's prime minister says crippling sanctions should be maintained against the Islamic Republic until the country ends its regional "aggression."

Benjamin Netanyahu has harshly criticized the U.S.-led framework deal with Iran, which offers relief from sanctions in exchange for scaling back its suspect nuclear program. Netanyahu said Sunday that a better deal would tie the lifting of all sanctions, "to an end of Iran's aggression in the region, its worldwide terrorism and its threats to annihilate Israel." Iran demands



that all sanctions be lifted on the day the agreement goes into effect. Iran backs regional militant groups that fight

Israel, including Hamas and Lebanon's Hezbollah, as well as forces fighting in Syria, Iraq and Yemen. (AP)

## Growing China, Russia Military Activity in Asia-Pacific: US

WASHINGTON - The commander of U.S. forces in the Pacific said Wednesday that major land reclamation by China at outposts in the South China Sea could allow it to exert more influence over the contested area and deploy military assets such as long-range radar and advanced missile systems. Adm. Samuel Locklear also told the House Armed Services Committee that Russia has escalated military activity in the Asia-Pacific in recent months to a near Cold War-level.

Locklear's area of command straddles a vast area of land and ocean where the Obama administration has tried to elevate America's presence, and where other major powers jockey for influence. He was addressing a hearing on U.S. military strategy and posture in the region. In the past year, China has conducted massive land reclamation at previously submerged reefs in the South China Sea despite a U.S. call for a freeze on such construction to give time for diplomacy to work between China and its neighbors in South-

east Asia. Locklear said China has aggressive reclamation and construction projects at eight outposts in the Paracel and Spratly island chains, including what appears to be an airfield at Fiery Cross Reef, which is also claimed by Vietnam, the Philippines and Taiwan. It's one of many disputed, tiny land features in that ocean. Locklear said the artificial islands would allow China to provide basing and resupply for its large and growing fleet of maritime security vessels. (AP)

## Russia Warns US Troops in Ukraine Could Destabilize Situation

MOSCOW - Russia has warned that the presence of foreign military personnel could "destabilize" the situation in Ukraine, after U.S. paratroopers arrived this week to train Ukrainian soldiers.

A spokesman for President Vladimir Putin, Dmitry Peskov, told reporters Friday that instructors from "third countries," besides Russia or Ukraine, could upset the situation in Ukraine's east, where pro-Russian rebels are engaged in an armed rebellion against Ukrainian forces.

A U.S. airborne brigade arrived in Ukraine this week to conduct a series

of training sessions with Ukrainian troops. On Thursday, President Putin accused the United States of trying to dominate international relations, but said Russia is still "always open to cooperation."

He spoke Thursday in an annual live question-and-answer session on Russian television during which he took questions from members of the Russian public. Referring to the United States, Putin said "major superpowers that claim their uniqueness and consider themselves the only center of power in the world" need "vassals," not "allies."

He said that after World War II Moscow tried to impose its model of development on many Eastern European countries by force, and "there was nothing good" in this. The Americans are now "acting in a similar way by trying to impose their model around the world," he said, adding that they too would fail. The Russian president also suggested that the United States had pressured some European leaders not to attend events in Moscow on May 9 commemorating the 70th anniversary of the end of World War II in Europe. (Agencies)

## Australia will Soon Pay Refugees to Resettle in Cambodia

CANBERRA - Refugees from Africa, the Middle East and South Asia who are being held on the Pacific atoll of Nauru after being rejected by Australia could soon be paid to resettle in impoverished Cambodia in an arrangement by the Australian government that has been condemned by human rights activists as inhumane and potentially dangerous. The deal signed last year

with Cambodia, which will cost Australia more than 10 million Australian dollars (\$7.6 million) a year, is the latest step in Australia's evolving policy of deterring asylum seekers from attempting to reach Australian shores by boat. The government has vowed that no boat arrivals will ever be resettled in Australia. More than 200 of the 1,200 asylum seekers held in an Australian-run de-

tention camp on Nauru have been assessed to be genuine refugees and are eligible for resettlement in Cambodia if they volunteer to go, according to Australian officials. It isn't clear how many of them - including Iranians, Pakistanis, Afghans, Somalis, Sudanese and Uighurs - have agreed to go to Cambodia, whose culture and customs are different from their first choice, Australia. (AP)

## N. Korea Warns U.S. Envoy of 'Bigger Mishap' Than a Knife Attack

SEOUL - A North Korean propaganda unit said the U.S. ambassador to South Korea could face a "bigger mishap" than the knife attack to his face last month if he does not stop insulting North Korea with "laughable" accusations. U.S. envoy Mark Lippert said in a speech on Wednesday that if

North Korea improves its human rights record and takes steps to end its nuclear programme, it will be rewarded with prosperity and better ties with the outside world, including the United States. The North's Committee for the Peaceful Reunification of Korea said Lippert's remarks were proof that Wash-

ington was intent on hostility. "Lippert needs to drop the bad habit of rashly engaging in scheming chatter distorting the truth and instigating war by taking issue with us," the committee said in a commentary published on Thursday on the Uriminzokkiri propaganda web site. (Reuters)

## Saleh Says will not Leave Country

CAIRO - Former Yemen president Ali Abdullah Saleh said he would not leave the country in a post on his official Facebook page on Friday, contradicting reports in the Gulf Arab media that he sought a safe exit. "I'm not the type who goes looking for a place to live in Jeddah, Paris or Europe. My country is my birthplace. The person who can say to Ali Abdullah Saleh 'leave your country' has not been



and will not be born," he wrote. A Saudi-led alliance has been bombing Yemen's Iran-allied Houthi rebels and army units loyal to Saleh

for three weeks, fueling speculation that he might seek a political settlement that protects him and his powerful family. (Reuters)

## S. Africa Seeks Diplomatic Support to Defeat Anti-Immigrant Unrest

PRETORIA - South Africa sought diplomatic support from countries across the continent on Friday to defeat the "demon" of anti-immigrant violence in which at least four people have been killed over the past fortnight. Foreign nationals have complained that the South African police are failing to protect them, raising the prospect of a row between Pretoria

and its neighbors, as well as stirring hostility to South Africans working abroad. The unrest, which began in the port town of Durban, has spread to Johannesburg where police fired rubber bullets and a stun grenade on Friday to end a stand-off between South Africans and an immigrant vigilante group armed with machetes. (Reuters)

## Neighbour News

### Kerry Conveys to Sharif US Concern over Lakhvi's Release

WASHINGTON - US Secretary of State John Kerry conveyed the Obama administration's concern on Zakiur Rahman Lakhvi's release when he spoke with Pakistan Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif earlier this week, the US State Department said on Thursday. At a news briefing, the department's spokesperson Marie Harf said the conversation focused on Lakhvi's release and the situation in Yemen. The statement she read out, however, placed more emphasis on Lakh-

vi's release than on the situation in Yemen. Secretary Kerry "expressed concern that the perpetrators of the 2008 terrorist attacks be brought to justice", she said. Secretary Kerry also noted that 160 innocent people, including US citizens were killed in the 2008 terrorist attacks in Mumbai, she said. Responding to a question, Ms Harf reiterated the US position that sending or not sending troops to Yemen was Pakistan's decision and the United States had no position on this. (Agencies)

### Tehran, Beijing will Work to Broaden Defense Ties: Dehqan

TEHRAN - Iran's defense minister says the Islamic Republic and China share a very successful experience of defense cooperation and are determined to strengthen mutual relations in the defense sector.

Brigadier General Hossein Dehqan made the remarks in a meeting with China's Defense Minister Chang Wanquan in Moscow, Russia, on Friday.

The Iranian official brought up the issue of the ISIL Takfiri terrorists and the extent of their influence in East Asia, which he stated, meant a threat to security of China, the Caucasus region and the Central Asia.

Brigadier General Dehqan, who was in the Russian capital to at-

tend the fourth Moscow International Security Conference, also emphasized that regional countries should improve serious cooperation and interaction to eradicate Takfiri-Zionist groups.

He denounced the West for supporting terrorist groups and violating the rights of nations in the region and warned that insecurity would have its own repercussions for the very governments that support the extremist groups.

He added that a meeting which is scheduled to be held among Iran, Russia and China in the near future would play a very effective role in "countering common threats and settling security problems in the region. (Agencies)

### Chinese Foreign Ministry Confirms 'Huge Financing' to Pakistan

BEIJING - Pakistan needs a "huge amount of financing" for infrastructure and energy projects and China is ready to announce help when President Xi Jinping visits on Monday, a Chinese Foreign Ministry official said on Friday. Islamabad has for decades been Beijing's closest ally in South Asia, and China - which is expanding its influence in the region - is a major trading partner and key supplier of military technology to Pakistan. Chinese Assistant Foreign Minister Liu Jianchao declined to offer details in a briefing to reporters ahead of Xi's two-day trip, which is scheduled to begin on Monday, saying the "specific figure" would be announced during the visit. But he said a "huge

amount of financing" was needed for projects in the transport, infrastructure and energy fields that are part of a China-Pakistan economic corridor initiative. "China stands ready to provide financial support for Pakistan to be used on these projects," Liu said.

The Wall Street Journal reported that Xi would announce a \$46 billion spending plan for infrastructure, with the largest share going for electricity generation. China has been a key financial and military ally of Islamabad over the years and Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif secured promises of \$42 billion worth of investment when he went to Beijing in November 2014. (Agencies)

### Kazakhstan's Massive Oil Field is Finally Getting Repaired

ASTANA - Kazakhstan's massive Kashagan oil field is scheduled to begin production again in 2017, according to Royal Dutch Shell's 2014 annual report. The field, discovered in 2000 in the north Caspian Sea and believed to be one of the largest discovered in the past 30 years, has been troubled since its inception by delays, cost overruns, and engineering difficulties.

Weeks after starting production in 2013, leaks forced it to shut down. Earlier this year, Italian oil service company Saipem won a \$1.8 billion contract to lay two 95 kilometer replacement pipelines that would enable the field to begin

pumping again. The leaks that shut down production were caused by stress fractures, in turn caused by concentrations of "toxic, metal-eating hydrogen sulphide (H2S)" in the oil being pumped up 4,200 meters from under the bed of the Caspian Sea. The new pipes, according to Saipem, will be made of carbon steel with an internal coating of a corrosion-resistant alloy. Reports last year indicated that the repairs could cost up to \$3.6 billion; the Financial Times reported that several people familiar with the project would "select the more expensive, more corrosion-resistant option, putting the cost of repairs at \$3.6bn or more." (Reuters)